



Rick, St. Paul Mayor Kyle Fletcher, Board of Supervisors Member Robbie Robbins and area residents mark the inauguration of cellular telephone service from the new tower constructed and activated at Rick's request.

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Launch of the St. Paul Cell Phone Tower

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April 1, 2010

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I am pleased to return to St. Paul today for the launch of the new Alltel wireless communications tower, which will provide residents of St. Paul and the surrounding areas with access to better wireless telephone services.

The launch of the new wireless tower is the culmination of many months of effort by my office in coordination with Wise County officials to attract better cellular phone coverage for the St. Paul area.

More than two years ago, my office received a petition signed by hundreds of Wise County residents wanting better cell phone services. I sent the petition to several wireless carriers making the argument that the number of individuals who signed the petition clearly indicated that there would be a sufficient customer base to warrant an investment of tower facilities in the area. I also noted that St. Paul's proximity to U.S. Route 58 would make the placement of a tower in this area beneficial to visitors to Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky.

Alltel responded to my request, selecting St. Paul as the location for a new tower based on both the need for improved coverage in the community but also for connectivity of coverage along such a commonly traveled route.

As a result of my contact with Alltel, company officials worked diligently to identify an appropriate site for a wireless tower in St. Paul, and the company constructed a new wireless communications tower 199 feet in height on the East side of St. Paul near U.S. Route 58.

The new tower will provide wireless communications capabilities with Alltel's 3G Wireless technology to an estimated 4,000 Wise County residents as well as coverage to an estimated 10,000 drivers on Wise County highways. The 3G coverage enables customers to download files twice as fast and upload files 10 times faster than with earlier network technologies. This means that Wise County residents can fully benefit from the new smart-phones and other wireless communications devices on the market today. In addition, first responders and law enforcement in the area will have better communications capabilities.

Today's launch of new wireless services in Wise County is the second such announcement in recent years. In 2008, at my urging, Alltel constructed a similar tower in Pound, providing wireless services to residents of Pound and travelers along U.S. Route 23. I have urged Alltel to continue to make similar investments in other locations in Southwest Virginia.

Wireless communications are essential to meeting our economic development goals for the region. The mobility of our society necessitates a demand for new and greater wireless services, and businesses seeking to expand or begin new operations often consider the availability of wireless communications services when choosing new locations. For these reasons, the launch of wireless communications services in St. Paul will not only improve the quality of life for Wise County residents but also enhance the area's attractiveness to new businesses and the job opportunities they bring.

I would like to take the opportunity of these remarks to thank a number of individuals who have been instrumental in the success we celebrate today.

Ronnie Robbins, who represents St. Paul on the Wise County Board of Supervisors, and the other Members of the Board deserve our thanks today for their longstanding efforts to provide improved communications capabilities to Wise County residents.

Kyle Fletcher, Mayor of St. Paul, also deserves our thanks today for his commitment to this project.

I also want to thank Shayne Barnette, the Alltel Store Manager for the Wise/Norton location, for her assistance with this project.

Howard Moore, Alltel's manager of network operations, and Bobby Marshall, Alltel's Senior Network Technician, also deserve recognition today for the expertise they provided in the development of this tower.

Finally, I would like to thank my Deputy Chief of Staff Laura Lee for her persistent and persuasive efforts to expand communications services throughout the Ninth Congressional District.

The new St. Paul Alltel tower is an example of what can be achieved when citizens, government officials and private industry work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work, I want to thank all here and offer special congratulations to the Wise County residents receiving new wireless communications services.